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Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of communism, the very meaning of Europe has been opened up and is in the process of being redefined. European states and societies are wrestling with the expansion of NATO and the European Union and with new streams of immigration, while a renewed and reinvigorated cultural engagement has emerged between East and West. But the fast-paced transformations of the last 15 years also have deeper historical roots. The reconfiguring of contemporary Europe is entwined with the cataclysmic events of the twentieth century, two world wars, the Holocaust, and with the processes of modernity that, since the eighteenth century, have shaped Europe and its engagement with the rest of the world.

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Vangelis Calotychos

THE BALKAN PROSPECT
IDENTITY, CULTURE, AND POLITICS
IN GREECE AFTER 1989

VANGELIS CALOTYCHOS

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THE BALKAN PROSPECT

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book began over a bowl of tomato soup. I was six. My mother and I were traveling by train from Munich to Athens on the Acropolis Express in 1968. As always, she had prepared enough food to see us through the most arduous part of the trip, through the endless cornfields of central Yugoslavia. She and I sat in our compartment in anticipation of the Greek border: keen to see the *evzones*, to buy kebab on a stick from vendors on the platform and to use the toilet facilities, finally, which my mother was convinced were cleaner than those encountered in Yugoslavia. On this particular trip, I was famished and wilting in the heat. Against her better judgment, she agreed to take me to the restaurant car and buy something plain for my upset stomach—the bowl of tomato soup. To the waiters' dismay, soon after its arrival at our table, I turned pale and became horribly sick. To this day, I have never been quite clear whether the sickness was brought on by the soup's ingredients, the stifling heat, or by my mother's hard-nosed sense of cultural difference and geopolitics.

In the 1980s, my perceptions of the region overcame the fallout from this somewhat apocryphal incident. I traveled around the Yugoslav republics on the Magic Bus and was inspired by the diversity of the landscape and the culture. So much so that I was devastated by the outbreak of the secessionist wars that tore the country apart in the early 1990s. I also remember being deeply troubled by the threat that the conflict would spill over the border to Greece as I watched images of the crisis from my graduate apartment in Boston. Soon such footage was supplemented by captivating images of a different order in films from the region. I read whatever I could lay my hands on to understand events. Later during that decade, I began to teach classes on Balkan literature and film at NYU. However, I felt myself ill-prepared to speak about or for "the region." Gradually, I realized that my emerging research focus was about my own relation to this region and, by extension, my understanding of Greek perceptions of identity and place, in or out of the Balkans, and in or out of Europe. In time, I came to see how a Balkan dimension was informing a whole host of cultural, social, and political issues within Greece itself. My conversations in Greece with immigrant workers from the Balkans illuminated how local, regional, supranational, and global contexts impact people's everyday lives.

I am grateful to all my students at Harvard, NYU, and Columbia for helping me make sense of this tangled web. I benefited immensely from my lively exchanges

with an exceptional set of graduate students: (in order of appearance) Jessie Labov, Tatjana Aleksić, and Ipek Celik. All have since been appointed to prestigious academic posts. At Columbia, I was fortunate that Gordon Bardos occasionally would ask me to collaborate on planning events for the Balkan studies series at the Harriman Institute. In Greece, my friendship with the film director Constantine Giannaris enlivened my perspective on a changing Greek social landscape. I appreciate his very dark humor. Thanos Anastopoulos always responded to my requests with resourcefulness and optimism. Dušan Bjelić's passionate engagement with the Balkans has always been instructive and reminds me of my own troubled scholarly concern for Cyprus. In Boston, I recall impassioned disputes about conflict in the Balkans with Dimitris Keridis, Marino Marcich, and Paul Simmons. Keith S. Brown was later my interlocutor and a great resource for all things Balkan in Providence, Rhode Island. Arsinoi Lainiotis and Jaime Armin Mejía always provided perspective from afar. My colleagues at the Program in Hellenic Studies at Columbia, Karen Van Dyck and Stathis Gourgouris, read with generosity one, perhaps even more than one, version of this manuscript. Michael Herzfeld, Mark Mazower, and Nelson Moe supported the project in a timely manner. In general, I appreciate the friendship and support of all my departmental colleagues down the years.

For a second time, I have chosen a still from Theo Angelopoulos's films to adorn the cover of one of my books. The choice gives me pause. It makes me realize how my longstanding tussle with the director's oeuvre has been both improbable and frustrating but also conflicted and so productive. I was sorry to hear of his tragic death in a road accident on set as I was finishing this book.

I am also grateful to Sotiris Goritsas, Milcho Manchevski, and Philippos Tsitos for graciously providing me with permission and materials from their films. Citations from Guy Lee's translation of Catullus is reprinted with permission from Oxford University Press; excerpts from Edmund Keeley's translation of *George Seferis: Collected Poems @ 1967*, reprinted in a revised edition in 1995, are reproduced here with permission from Princeton University Press; Alan H. Sommerstein's translation from *Lysistrata and Other Plays* is published with kind permission from Penguin, UK. Finally, I am also grateful to Artemis Leontis for her permission to quote from her translation of the *Bridge of Arta* as well as for our productive discussion of diaspora in Angelopoulos's films.

The publication of this book was made possible, in part, with a generous grant from the Harriman Institute, Columbia University. The Henry Cabot Lodge Fund in the Department of Classics at Columbia also covered rights and permissions related to classical materials. I am grateful to Kirsten Painter for her deft copyediting of the manuscript. To Diana Wade for her summer research of newspapers and microfilms from the early 1990s. Matthew J. Singleton helped me with the bibliography and Chris Cecot with the index. I owe a special debt of gratitude to my editor at Palgrave, Chris Chappell, for his belief in and commitment to this project. I also thank assistant editor, Sarah Whalen, for her patience with my dithering over images and permissions.

This book has been in the works for over 20 years. This coincides with the span of my relationship with Patricia Felisa Barbeito, who has sat through more than her

fair share of experimental Balkan films and some workmanlike lectures. She did not always do so stoically. While her resolve in these endeavors has waned in recent years, our love has not. To our remarkable children, Lola and Manolis, I offer the book as an excuse for all those Sunday afternoons when, regretfully, I did not join them (and our friends Radovan, Kati, Juju Kovačević, and Olga Bakić) on their trips to Central Park or to some other lively corner or prospect of New York City. In many ways, writing a book is a poor alibi, like trying to cast a shadow contrary to the sun.